THE POLYPHONIC AI HAT ●

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES ABOUT WOMEN'S SEXUAL IDENTITY AND AI

THE POLYPHONIC AI HAT (2018) is an artistic design fiction short film made by design researcher and artist Anna Brynskov. The film illustrates the interactions with a feminist AI system that reflects diversity and multiplicity in women's sexuality. It challenges stereotypes around women's sexual identity, AI, and about the relation between women's sexual identity and AI. Containing voice recordings from 30 women who enacted reactions to touch in an intimate or sexual context, the hat embodies an imaginary of a feminist AI system.

Challenging Stereotypes about Women's Sexual Identity and AI

Regarding women's sexuality, we are surrounded by a culture that foregrounds stereotypical narratives about women's desires and sexual identity in films and fiction literature, and these stereotypes can even be traced in technological services such as Apple's digital personal assistant Siri. THE POLYPHONIC AI HAT is a critical feminist technological service that challenges this by making it possible to experience women's sexual identity in its plurality, diversity and polyphonic essence, and to learn that this should be respected.

Regarding artificial intelligence (AI), stereotypical narrative in films and literature often portray AI as something that should be feared. Moreover, AI is criticized in software critical literature for generalizing and thereby for potentially harming people who do not wish or manage to fit into a patriarchal and heteronormative society. THE POLYPHONIC AI HAT challenges this conception of AI by taking inspiration from an AI system described in Lev Manovich' cultural analytics paradigm (2017). The system allows cultural analysts to zoom into an opaque black box and investigate selected parts of extensive datasets to understand idiosyncrasies and details in the data. Thereby, quantitative data is used to find individual and idiosyncratic examples that can be experienced and studied qualitatively, instead of quantitative data used just to generate a statistically optimal output.

Intimate Touch and Sensitive Personal Data

The hat reflects the optimistic idea of using AI for a warm-hearted, humane, and feminist purpose. In practice, the women's voices are activated through touch of the hat—not in a statistically optimal way but in their original unique shape, however often overlapping. Thereby, the 'toucher' activates the data chaos inside the black box and is pushed towards not assuming how women wish to get touched and interacted with in intimate situations. The hat is resisting the idea that there is a one-size-fits-all solution for women's bodies by presenting a non-generalized reality yet mediated by an AI system.

The film production involved a data collection of three sound files from 30 women each in total. Several of the recordings fostered conversations around intimate touch,

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sexual preferences, and gender. Furthermore, the data collection forced Brynskov to reflect on implications regarding privacy when collecting intimate data and sparked questions regarding scale, ownership, and purpose of collecting sensitive personal data.s